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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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AS THE FAMILY GROWS

So Grows The House. Letting down cuffs or letting out seams are ways to meet some of the problems of a growing family. But when family members' sizes, numbers, or activities outgrow the house, that's a real battle to be faced. Looking into the problem, scientists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service have designed a low-cost modular house that can be economically remodeled to grow or change with the family. While the house meets about half of the flexibility goals sought in the research, the scientists say future generations of the house will include additional features to achieve the maximum flexibility. The current design incorporates several features that overcome some of the disadvantages of current houses. For example, interior walls of the house are readily moveable so that shapes and sizes of rooms can be changed with a minimum of effort. Of major interest, too, is the low cost of the construction. A prototype house was built at a cost of about \$9,800, excluding the lot, with only 651 hours of labor. A complete description of the house plus detailed drawings and photographs of the various construction stages have been included in a USDA publication, "Design, Construction and Evaluation of a Low-Cost Panelized House" (Technical Bulletin No. 1544). Copies of the publication can be purchased for 45 cents each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Additional information on the house is available from Dr. Jerry O. Newman, Rural Housing Research Unit, ARS/USDA, P.O. Box 792, Clemson, So. Carolina 29631.

COPING WITH COFFEE COSTS

How To Live With--Or Without--Your Daily Quota. A subject very likely to be discussed over coffee these days is coffee. With the price of coffee almost double what it was a year ago, a coffee break could almost break you. The majority of U.S. adults drink some coffee every day, and they are more likely to drink coffee than tea, milk, soft drinks or almost any other beverage. Some people will continue to drink the same amount of coffee each day no matter what the price; others may decide to drink less; some may decide to switch to other beverages. The table on page 3 shows the cost of a cup of coffee made from different market forms of coffee and the cost of other beverages. Prices are those in Washington, D.C., January 1977. A footnote tells you how to figure costs in other areas. Such information can help you in deciding whether to swig or switch.



FOOD ON THE MOVE

Accommodating Senior Shoppers. Many senior citizens in Boston do their food shopping at a corner grocery store-sidewalk fruit stand-supermarket all rolled into one. Their shopping center is a green van which rolls to 30 locations in Boston each week. The mobile market, a converted bookmobile, carries some 300 items from soups, cereals, milk, meats, fruits, and vegetables to frozen TV dinners, ice cream, and frozen juices. The items are purchased at shelf prices from the city supermarkets. The mobile market prices are the same as those at the supermarket--even the advertised specials. According to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, any Boston citizen over 60 may shop at the mobile market where they can get help from a store manager and two other employees. The store accepts cash or food stamps. The van concept was developed by the Boston mayor's staff to assist citizens who, due to physical handicaps and other problems, find shopping at large supermarkets difficult. The supermarket on wheels serves approximately 500 older Bostonians each week.

JACK FROST TRAVELS SOUTH

And Bites Into Produce. January's Florida freeze destroyed many fresh vegetables and some oranges, but the impact on average retail food prices will probably be small and temporary, according to USDA's Economic Research Service. Most of Florida's tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, snap beans, and eggplants are gone. The ones we'll see in stores will be from California, Texas, and Mexico. Many fresh vegetables will go up sharply in price by March. After that, the size of new crops should largely determine the prices. The hardier vegetables--cabbage, celery, lettuce, escarole, and sweet corn--survived the freeze but will be lower in quality. Although some persons have predicted that the retail price of frozen concentrated orange juice will soar, it's still too early to tell, ERS says. Fresh oranges will go up a bit, but supplies from other orange-growing areas will meet the demand. Little impact on grapefruit prices is expected. The citrus story could have been much worse, but Florida producers were expecting a record crop this year. USDA will more fully assess the damage in the February 9 Crop Production report.

NEWS THAT'S FIT TO REPRINT

How To Deal With Mushrooms and Cut-ups. Did you know that mushrooms have caps and buttons? Or that they have gills which they conceal behind veils? These are true facts. They are not, however, from an expose of mushroom idiosyncrasy. Rather these tidbits, along with other helpful hints, are from "How To Buy Fresh Mushrooms," an information sheet from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. The sheet, one of five new ones, is in the AMS series of one-page, reproducible information sheets on how to buy and use foods. A second sheet, "How To Buy Canned Mushrooms," gives information on canned mushroom grades and styles and tips on how to use them. The three other new sheets are really "how-to-cope" types. They provide illustrated, step-by-step procedures on how to cut up poultry without going to war: "How To Carve Roast Turkey," "How To Bone Chicken Breasts," and "How To Cut Up A Chicken." The information sheets, which are camera-ready copies suitable for reprinting, are designed primarily for teachers and leaders in food and nutrition education programs. Single free copies of the information sheets are available from the Information Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Cost of a Cup (6 fluid ounces) of Selected Beverages

Beverage and purchase form	Purchase unit	Price per unit 1/ dol	Cups from a unit no	Cost of a cup 2/ cents
<u>Coffee:</u>				
Ground				
Regular (N) 3/	1 lb	3.19	50	6.4
Regular (S) 4/	1 lb	2.39	50	4.8
	2 lb	4.75	100	4.8
Instant				
Regular (N)	10 oz	3.39	142	2.4
Freeze-dried (N)	8 oz	4.79	120	4.0
	4 oz	2.49	60	4.2
<u>Tea:</u>				
Bags (S)	8 oz	1.39	100	1.4
Bags (N)	8 oz	1.95	100	2.0
Loose (N)	8 oz	1.39	100	1.4
Instant (N)	3 oz	1.69	120	1.4
<u>Cereal beverage:</u>				
Postum	8 oz	1.55	68	2.3
<u>Milk:</u>				
Whole fluid, fresh (S)	1/2 gal	.86	11	7.8
Nonfat dry (S)	for 20 qt	3.88	107	3.6
Nonfat dry (N)	for 20 qt	4.59	107	4.3
<u>Orange juice:</u>				
Frozen concentrate (S)	for 2 qt	.65	11	5.9
<u>Hot chocolate:</u>				
Dry cocoa	8 oz	.89	42	
--with sugar and whole fluid milk (S)				10.5
--with sugar and nonfat dry milk (N)				6.8
Commercial mix--made with water	16 oz	1.33	16	8.3
<u>Bouillon:</u>				
Cubes	50 cubes	.95	50	1.9
<u>Soft drinks:</u>				
Cola-type (S)	2-qt bottle	.65	11	5.9
Cola-type (N)	2 28-oz bottles	.95	9	10.6
	6 12-oz cans	1.59	12	13.2

1/ Washington, D.C., January 1977

2/ To figure local costs, divide the local price of the purchase unit specified in column 1 by the number of cups from a unit in column 3.

3/ Name brand

4/ Store brand

SAFETY FIRST

Keep Your Eye On The Cook. In 1974, USDA's Economic Research Service went forth to see what homemakers know and do about food safety. The report is in and ERS found that more than half of the 2500 household cooks interviewed have been violating at least one of several rules of food safety. Many homemakers left cooked meat or poultry or salad sandwiches at room temperature for more than two hours. Others cooked hamburger rare; maintained refrigerator temperatures above 45 degrees F. or stored leftover stuffing in the turkey -- all food safety "no-no's." Other consumer-awareness problems revealed by the report include a lack of understanding by the homemakers of their responsibility for proper hygienic food preparation and misconceptions about federal meat and poultry inspection procedures (about 63 percent of the homemakers thought it was "not likely at all" for inspected meat and poultry to bear harmful bacteria). Although there were many high-risk cooks in each of the demographic subgroups, younger homemakers, those with more education, and those from higher-income homes were somewhat more likely to make food safety mistakes. According to ERS, the survey establishes the need for more consumer education, identifies those groups needing food safety information, and lists the most effective ways of reaching them with the information. Single free copies of the report, "Food Safety: Homemakers' Attitudes and Practices" (AER-360), are available from the Publications Services, Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 0054-S, Washington, D.C. 20250.

CHILLING THE WINE BEFORE IT'S MADE

You Can Drink To That. Little old winemakers are lifting their glasses to scientists of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. The scientists have developed a process that promises to increase production by wineries and to keep amateur winemakers in grapes all year. The method involves freezing crushed grapes after harvest and holding them for later fermentation. Such a practice would help wineries avoid the rush to ferment all grapes at harvest, thus better utilizing facilities and labor. Amateur winemakers would have a supply of grapes throughout the year instead of depending on fresh grapes only during the fall and grape juice concentrate the rest of the time. The ARS scientists report that more juice can be extracted from crushed frozen grapes than from grapes that are crushed and then fermented. The freezing also releases more color from the skins of red grapes which enhances the color of the wine. Because freezing disrupts the grapes' cells, causing undesirable odor, flavor and color, sulfur dioxide is added to the crushed grapes before freezing instead of at the beginning of fermentation, the usual procedure. Otherwise, it's thaw the grapes, add the yeast and get on with the winemaking.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Special Reports Division, Room 459-A, Washington, D.C. 20250, or telephone 202-447-5437.
